



## 49 You Inspired Me

"Brittany was very excited about this opportunity, Mrs. Ashfrod. You have no idea how much it means to her." 1

Mrs. Finch, the owner of the orphanage clasped her hands together in sheer excitement as she spoke those words.

Amelie was already aware of that. When she came to visit the orphanage, the first thing she did was meet Brittany and talk to her about her future in the ballet school. Yes, the girl was excited but it was still a pretty big change which Amelie didn't want to simply overlook because she was about to leave.

"I hope you will not stop supporting her, Mrs. Finch. This is quite a change in a young girl's life and she seemed to be a pretty sensitive child. The transition will be hard, especially since she doesn't speak the language, so I hope you will at least stay in contact with her until she is well-adjusted."

Amelie felt very protective of the orphans

because she was an orphan too. Unlike others, she was lucky to have been born into money and connections, therefore, she considered it her life's goal to help those who weren't as fortunate as she.

"Of course!" Mrs. Finch tried to ensure her, "All the girls that you are sponsoring are still receiving our support, Mrs. Ashford. We do not abandon them simply because they are no longer our direct responsibility."

"I'm glad. I chose this orphanage because I trusted its workers so it makes me happy to know that I made the right choice."

The owner nodded and clapped her hands as she remembered something important.

"You know, Mrs. Ashford, perhaps it is thanks to your popular public image that influences the rest of the high society, but more and more people are expressing their desire to do charitable work."

Amelie arched her eyebrows. "Really? Might there be someone I know who has just recently become a philanthropist?"



"Of course! Mr. Liam Bennett is now an official sponsor of our orphanage too!" Mrs. Finch exclaimed happily. Amelie smiled as she was pleasantly surprised by this news.

*'Well, I guess it's admirable that he wants to do some charity work as well, however, since I am already sponsoring this orphanage, it would have been better if he chose another establishment that would need his help.'*

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Once her visit to the orphanage was over, Amelie still had another hour to kill before the next appointment in her schedule. Since it was already far past her lunchtime, she decided to take a break and eat at a restaurant near the orphanage.

It was a quiet place decorated with calm pastel tones and unassuming mass-market furniture indicating that it was not a restaurant of grand reputation. She didn't mind that; as long as there was good food, she would even eat at the gas station.

As she walked through the half-empty hall in search of the most comfortable spot, she noticed

Liam Bennett sitting at one of the tables next to the tall, wide window.

The second their eyes met, the man's face lit up as a wide, friendly smile appeared on his face.

"Miss Ashford!"

He jumped to his feet, almost knocking over the entire table. Amelie found his excitement endearing and smiled back at him.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Bennett. I didn't expect to see you here. Were you in the area?"

Liam pulled one of the chairs away from the table, offering Mrs. Ashford to take a seat in a gentlemanly manner. Amelie accepted his offer to join him and took a seat across the table from him.

Once all the necessary arrangements were done, Liam finally talked again.

"I was in the area, yes. I had to... take care of some important business here, you see."

His words reminded Amelie about the conversation she had with the owner of the orphanage. She wondered if Liam had become

their sponsor only today.

"Were you visiting the Dandelion orphanage by chance?"

Liam lowered his eyes in embarrassment.

"Busted! Yes, I came back from there just a couple of hours ago."

"Mrs. Finch told me you joined the charity program. May I ask why?" Amelie's sharp eyes refused to leave the man's face which only made him feel even more intimidated.

"Hmmm..." he started with a long, contemplating hum, "Perhaps I was inspired? I wanted to follow you in your footsteps, Miss Ashford. Since I will soon become the president of the Diamond Group, I realized, after watching you, of course, that I might be capable of doing more than just earning money. I want to know what it feels like to give it away too."

Somehow, Amelie felt slightly offended by his response. "So is it just an experiment to you, Mr. Bennett? If the results will not be satisfactory, you will simply abandon these children?"

Liam rushed to prove the opposite, his face growing pale as he realized his mistake. "No, of course not! How do I explain it... Well, this might be a little too embarrassing, to say the least."

He paused and looked away and Amelie noticed that his entire face turned beetroot red. Once again, she was overcome with bewilderment.

*'Is he... shy?'*

Liam grabbed a glass of ice-cold water and gobbled it down so fast that for a second, Amelie got seriously worried about him choking or getting sick. Nevertheless, the man was fine, and once it looked like his face regained its normal beige color, Mr. Bennett turned it back to Amelie and continued,

"You see, Miss Ashford... Ugh, I might as well just say it!" Suddenly, his face became serious and almost expressionless as he added, "You inspired me. Everything you do, everything you care for... If it is that important for you, then I want to value it too. I want to learn from you; I want to contribute too."

He paused and bit his tongue, *'And if something is to happen in the future... I want to make sure*

*that you do not lose anything of great importance.'* <sup>4</sup>

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